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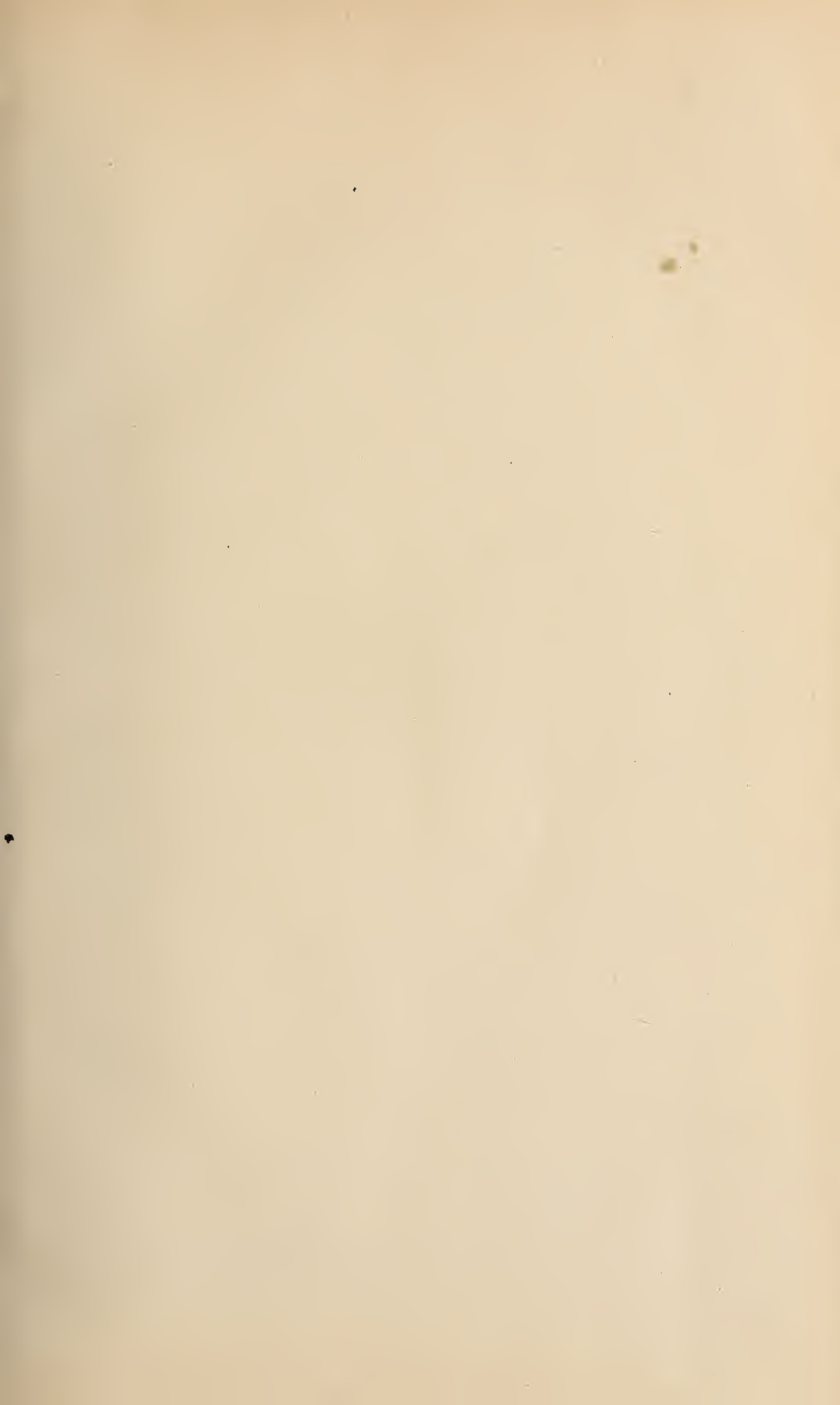
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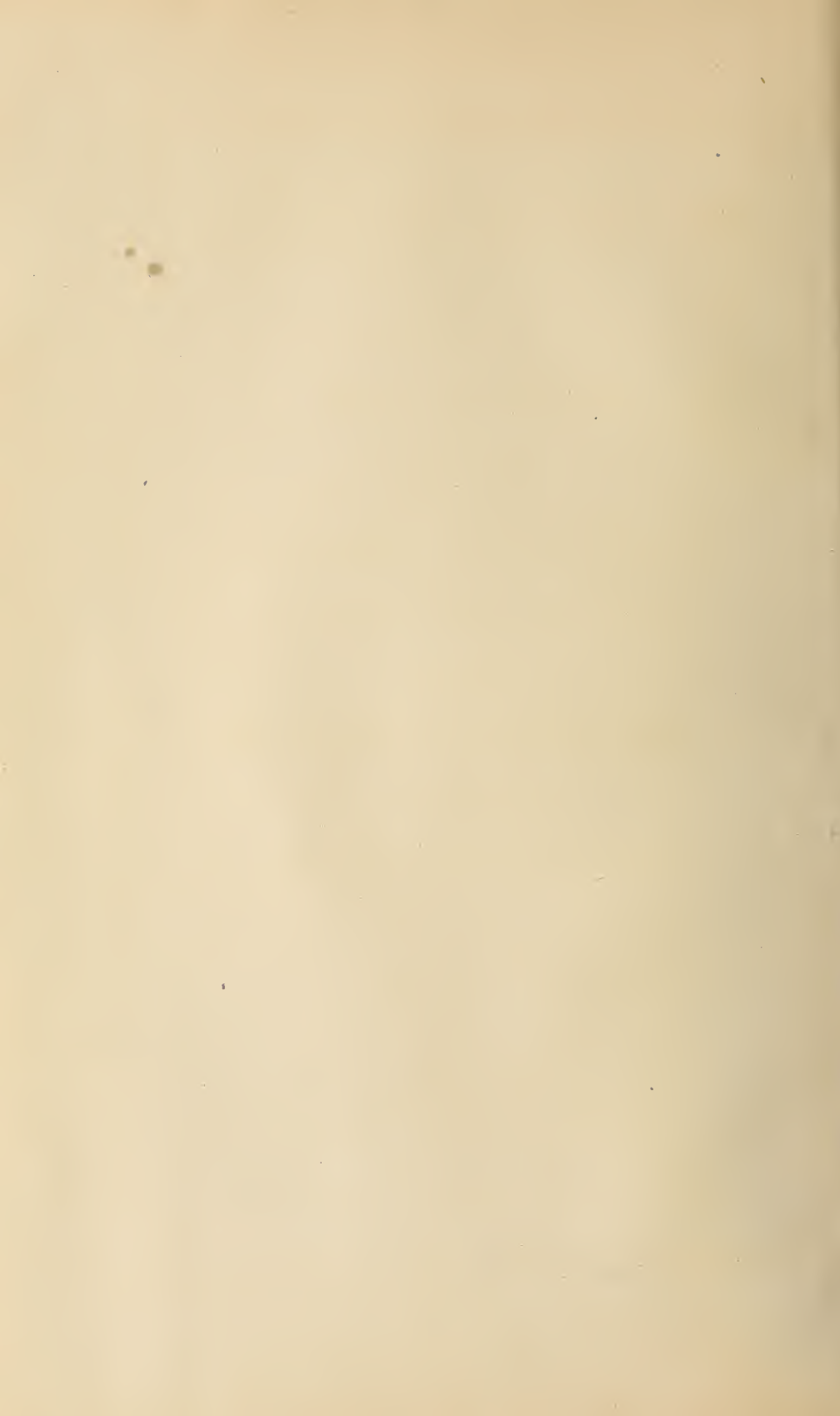
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.













THE MEMORIES OF THE PAST;

A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED BY THE

REV. WILLIAM R. DE WITT,

To his Congregation, Harrisburgh, Pa.,

ON THE

Seventieth Anniversary of his Birth-Day,

AND IN THE

Forty-Fourth Year of his Ministry in that Congregation.

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New-York :

JOHN W. AMERMAN, PRINTER,

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TO THE MEMBERS OF  
The Presbyterian Congregations of Harrisburgh,  
PENNSYLVANIA,  
THIS DISCOURSE

IS MOST AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,  
BY ONE WHO, FOR A LONG TIME, STOOD IN THE RELATION OF A PASTOR  
TO MOST OF THEM.



# SERMON.

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The days of our years are threescore years and ten.—Psalm, xc. 10.

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SUCH is the ordinary limit of human life on earth. By far the greatest part of our race die before they reach it. Very few, indeed, live beyond it. Since I last addressed you from this pulpit I have passed this boundary. I am now in the seventy-first year of my earthly life, and in the forty-fourth of my ministry in this congregation, as its spiritual teacher and pastor. There are reflections suggested and memories awakened by the occasion, that may not be uninteresting or unprofitable, to which I invite your attention.

I. In the early anticipations of future life, the thoughts of its end bear a very small proportion to those of the intervening events, which the imagination calls from the probabilities of the future, and arrays before the mind as the excitements of hope; yet I doubt whether any can be found to whom the question, "How long shall I probably live?" has been an utter stranger. With the most sanguine there have been hours when, however extended the horizon of their earthly existence may have appeared, there was yet a boundary beyond which it could not pass. That boundary may have receded as they approached it, and death deferred may again and again have encouraged the hope of



lengthened life ; but still, far off, its hazy horizon admonished of its coming end. Comparatively few outlive their own expectations. The end comes. The boundary is reached, long before they had hoped it would. Along the pathways of life are thickly strewn the graves of the dead, whose epitaphs, if truly written, would tell of plans unaccomplished and hopes not realized, of anticipated joys and sorrows alike buried with their ashes and passing away into oblivion. But it is not thus with all. Where are those who outlive their expectations, whose earthly existence stretches out far beyond the horizon, where they expected it would have terminated ? Their surprise is that they yet live—that the sepulchre has not long since been their abode. No one, in early youth, or even in mature manhood, however sanguine of life, who will seriously reflect on its contingencies, will make their calculations on living to threescore years and ten. There are none so young but can look upon the graves of their companions. As each year rolls round, the number of them increases. At the age of thirty, most of the companions of early youth have gone down to the land of silence. At fifty, they are like the gleanings of the summer vintage, here and there a cluster. Our life insurance companies, I believe, take no risks beyond sixty, and then only at such premiums as to render the refusal of their terms more desirable than their acceptance. Out of every ten thousand births only about one hundred reach the age of seventy ; so that, speaking after the manner of men, in regard to any individual, there is not more than one chance out of an hundred that he will reach his seventieth year. These chances fast diminish as his age increases. Of those who reach the ordinary limit of human life, how few are in possession of their mental

faculties, and fewer still of their physical powers. At sixty, one is reckoned among the aged. He may, from that period, continue for a few years on the ridge of life, at the altitude he has attained, and with profit look back and survey the steps by which he has ascended; but, ere long, he will begin to descend the shady side, and at seventy, in most cases, the descent becomes perceptible. Then, in the beautiful language of the wise man, "The keepers of the house begin to tremble, and the strong men bow themselves, and the grinders cease, because they are few, and they that look out at the windows are darkened. It is then that fears are in the way, and the almond tree flourishes, and the grasshopper becomes a burden, and desires fail."

There are only five or six in this congregation, who, with myself, have passed their threescore years and ten. With them, as with myself, life has been prolonged far beyond our expectations. We can look back to a period, when seventy years of age was hid to us, far beyond the horizon that seemed to limit our existence on earth. If some one had predicted that we should have been here now, we should have regarded it, if not among the impossibilities, yet among the extreme improbabilities of human life. We have all of us cause for unbounded gratitude to God, that, as He has seen proper to spare us so long, He has continued to us so much health of body, and, as we are fain to believe, so much soundness of mind. We are none of us insensible to the fact, that age is disposed to be indulgent to itself, and to claim immunity from these wastes, which time, ever imperceptible, makes on the mental as well as physical powers. We shall probably be the last to think, that, whatever may be the infirmities of our bodies, our minds are losing any of the vigor of their

maturity. When we shall learn that others think so, we will no doubt be greatly surprised, and, in the sobriety of age, judge that it is not only a very unfortunate, but a most profound mistake. But it cannot be hid from us that we are old, and are growing older. The sepulchres of our fathers and mothers are with us. The rosy cheeks of our youthful companions have long, long since paled in death, and the moss grows green over their gravestones. Here and there one who, in the strength of manhood, stemmed with us the currents of life, or bore the burden and heat of the day, remains to talk of other times. The memories of the past, though sad, are yet, many of them, tinged with roseate hues, and awake in the heart the "joys of grief." It is among our saddest, yet sweetest pleasures, to stand at the graves of the departed, hallowed by sacred memories, to recall their Christian virtues, their lives of faith and hope, those hours of Christian fellowship and communion, when our hearts beat in sympathy with each other's joys and sorrows, and when, beneath the outstretched wings of the cherubim, and near the mercy-seat, we together knelt and invoked the blessing of Him who there delights to manifest his gracious presence to loving and contrite hearts; and then, to think how securely their dust rests beneath the long grass, that waves over it, under the watchful eye and restoring hand of Jesus, the resurrection and the life; and to look forward in faith to that morning when, at the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God, their tombs shall rend, and they shall arise in the beauty of immortality, to hail in songs of holy praise their descending Lord. Then will come the new heavens and the new earth, over which the "trail of the serpent" shall never be seen; on which the cold shadow of death's

wing shall never fall; when the eye shall never be dimmed with a tear, nor the heart know the bitterness of grief; but when all shall bloom in perpetual youth, friendships strengthen with the years of eternity, and the joy of glad spirits grow ever deeper in the presence of their Lord. Blessed! blessed anticipations! How well calculated to soothe age under its many infirmities, to render peaceful and calm the evening of life, and to gild, with the brightest hues, the clouds that gather around the opening grave.

Seventy years! What changes have transpired within that time! Since then, more than two generations, comprising, according to the calculations of some, from eighteen to twenty hundred millions of human beings, have been born, have lived, have acted their part on the theatre of life, and passed away into eternity! What thoughts! what hopes! what fears! what joys! what sorrows! have agitated the minds of this inconceivable multitude! Could they, embodied, pass before us in our dreams, they would seem like the wrecks of a world. But they have all disappeared,

“Like the dew on the mountain,  
Like the foam on the billow,  
They are gone, and forever.”

All, but here or there one, have descended to an oblivion for which there can be no recall on earth. What the effect of their individual lives, even of the most obscure, has been on the destiny of the race, none but that omniscient God, who doeth according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, can tell.

The last years of the eighteenth, and those of the nineteenth century thus far, have been, perhaps, the



most eventful of the Christian era. Towards the close of the last century commenced those political upheavings which shook the thrones of kings and overthrew empires. In the year 1792, amid the frenzied violence of political parties, and scenes of horrid carnage, royalty was abolished in France, and the republic proclaimed. Soon after, Louis XVI. was beheaded, the Christian religion abolished, a harlot, as the Goddess of Reason, enthroned as the object of worship, the Bible publicly burned, the Sabbath abolished, and the decade instituted. With these changes commenced the reign of terror, at the recital of the horrors of which the heart to this day sickens. Throughout France the bonds of society were destroyed. All sense of security was lost. Atheism and infidelity stalked abroad in their darkest garb. The streets of Paris were deluged with blood. From the scenes of confusion and carnage Bonaparte emerged, rose to power, and, for years, swept with his victorious armies over Europe, laying prostrate thrones and empires, and erecting others upon their ruins. The whole of Europe, from the North Sea to the Mediterranean, from the Atlantic to the Don, shook beneath the tread of the mighty conqueror. Egypt felt the power of his arm, and Syria trembled in his grasp. His name, wherever heard, inspired dread, until confined to his rock-bound island, begirt by the waves of the ocean, he laid himself down to die, the victim of his own ambition. The results of his astonishing career have traveled onward, thus far, through the years of the century, moulding the institutions of Europe, and the current events as they have transpired. Perhaps at no time has the influence of the Napoleon dynasty been more felt in Europe, and throughout the world, than at present. If the empire

of the first Napoleon was the fruit of lawless ambition, it was founded upon the subversion of abuses, the most pernicious to the well-being of society. If the resources of his empire were perverted into means of advancing his own aggrandizement, in creating those resources he gave an impulse to all the departments of human industry, that not only France, but Europe, feels to this day. The same hand that inflicted the conscription gave the codes, of which he himself said, that they would be remembered, and cover his name with renown, when his victories were forgotten.

While the French revolution was in progress, we were launching our ship of State, and committing her to the rude billows of time, with vast hopes, yet intermingled with brooding fears. Not until the year 1792 was the experiment of a free government—a government based on the will of the people—fully inaugurated. Nearly a decade of years had then transpired since the close of our long, severe, but triumphant revolutionary struggle. That struggle, so gloriously terminated, was succeeded by a mental conflict, in settling the basis of our government, in some instances more severe, and at times with issues more weighty and more uncertain than had been the revolutionary contest itself. It is said, that great events bring upon the stage of action great men. Never in the history of the world were there greater and better men than those called forth in the providence of God to lay the foundation of this government; to establish its fundamental laws. So various, so directly in conflict were the interests to be consulted, and so opposite were the opinions to be reconciled, and with such determined tenacity were they held, that it seems almost a miracle that the thirteen original States adopted the Constitu-

tion, which, with some unimportant amendments, continues, to this day, the charter of our liberties. No one can read the history of that Constitution, the conflict of opinions on the gravest questions that agitated the convention that formed it, and the severe ordeal through which it passed in the several States to which it was submitted for their adoption, without the deepest conviction, that to the overruling providence of God we owe the final establishment of our government. We cannot doubt but that He, by whose agency it was established, designed to accomplish by it great purposes of good to the race ; that he will sustain it in its severest trials, and preserve it in safety until these purposes are fully accomplished. We look back to those days of trial and of triumph as the earnest of a yet glorious future. We cherish the memories, and venerate the names, of the heroes and statesmen of those days. Ours is, indeed, the legacy of departed greatness. There is a brilliancy in that inheritance which time cannot tarnish. We may, with perfect propriety, nay, we should be recreant to the best feelings of our own nature, did we not rejoice in a parentage whom God raised up, and so richly gifted, for a work of such transcendant importance to all future generations. It is with feelings of devout gratitude to God that I cherish the memory of a father who, after engaging with his whole soul in the revolutionary conflict, submitting to every sacrifice required for the cause of freedom, was employed, with the Hamiltons, and the Jays and Livingstons of his native State, in securing the adoption of the Federal Constitution against the most persistent opposition. The recital of all the elements in our national prosperity ; our increase in population and in wealth ; our improvements in all the



arts of civilized life ; the development of our national resources ; our advancement in education and religion ; in short, our progress in every thing that conduces to the welfare of man, in his individual, domestic and social relations under this Constitution, would be like the recital of a fairy tale. It finds no equal in the records of the centuries, and may well stand forth as the wonder of the world.

The second war of independence found the sons of revolutionary sires prepared to gird themselves for the conflict. The few of us men, septuagenarians, that belong to this congregation, I believe, without an exception, were enrolled and marched for the defence of our country against British invasion. Since the termination of that war, so honorable to us, how astonishing has been our progress, until now, we find ourselves involved in a civil war for the suppression of a gigantic, organized rebellion, which we should have regarded as the result of frenzied insanity, did we not know it to be the offspring of long, deliberate, pains-taking, perjured villainy, to accomplish the most stupendous wrong for the gratification of personal ambition. And now we, who have numbered our threescore years and ten, rejoice that our blood flows in the veins of those who have stepped forth, voluntarily, to fill the ranks of their countrymen, and fight, if required, to the death, in their country's righteous cause, for the suppression of this rebellion against its government. There have been days of deep gloom since this rebellion began, but the cloud has broke and the clear sky is seen through its openings. Our armies are advancing with the sword and the Constitution in one hand and the olive branch in the other. The valleys of Tennessee and Alabama have heard the shout of welcome to the brave

defenders of their country. We hail it as the earnest of a louder and more joyous shout, that shall ere long roll up the waters of the Mississippi and down the valley of the Potomac, followed by the proclamation of the restoration of the Union, and the return of peace and friendship. God hasten the day.\* Then, we fondly hope and believe, though we pretend not to the gift of prophecy, a new order of things will follow. The bitter sectional jealousies of former years will be supplanted by a better understanding and an enduring friendship. The different portions of our Union will be knit together by social ties that will never be broken. Northern industry, thrift and skill will prove that Southern fields can be best cultivated by free labor. The long enslaved sons of Africa, nurtured under the genial influences of a pure Christianity, and prepared for freedom, will find eventually their home in the land of their fathers, and carry with them the blessings of civil and religious liberty. The darkness that has so long rested upon that land shall roll away. Its wildernesses and solitary places shall be glad, its deserts blossom as the rose, and the voice of salvation resound through the land.

In referring to the changes that have taken place during the last seventy years, we must not overlook the astonishing advances that have been made in the sciences, and their application to the arts of civilized life. Could we suppose an individual, arrived to the years of maturity, seventy years ago, and familiar with the

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\* Ah! what bad prophets we are! During the interval between the preaching and publication of this sermon events have occurred that have thrown a dark cloud over the anticipations once so fondly cherished. But still we will not despond. The Lord has brighter days in reserve for our bleeding country. We will hope on and look up, for God is great and good.

condition of society then—with the state of agriculture, commerce, trade manufactures and the habits of domestic life—taken suddenly away, and now restored again, so that the intervening seventy years would be a perfect blank, yet with a vivid recollection of what then was, and a knowledge of what now is, it would seem to him that he had been translated to another world; at least, he would be overwhelmed with surprise and astonishment wherever he turned, so great would be the change. The discovery of our coal-fields, and the use made of that mineral; the application of steam-power to all the purposes to which it is now applied; the general use of gas in our cities and large towns; the magnetic telegraph, and various other discoveries, inventions and improvements. Our increase in population, in wealth, in luxury, and in all that ministers to the pride of life, has put an entirely new face on society. To us, who have lived through all these years, how strange, how like a dream it seems! A few years since I looked upon the first vessel successfully propelled by steam on the Hudson River, and then listened with wrapped wonder to the following prophecy of one of New-York's most gifted sons: "A swan has been hatched on the Hudson, whose cygnets shall yet glide upon the waters of the Volga, and people the shores of the Caspian. The Genius of Asia, high seated on the peaks of Caucasus, his eyes still moist as he surveys the ruins of Palmyra, Persepolis and Jerusalem, shall bow with humble reverence to the inventive spirit of the western world." This prophecy I have lived to see fulfilled, and more than fulfilled. For not only on the waters of the Volga, and along the shores of the Caspian, do the cygnets of that swan glide; they ride majestically on the waves of the Pacific, and over



the billows of the stormy Atlantic, amid the icebergs of the polar seas and the isles of the tropics. Forty-four years ago, from New-York to Harrisburgh was a severe journey of three days; now it is performed with ease in a few hours. A few years ago, and the world was surprised by the discovery of the magnetic telegraph. Now it has brought into proximity the distant ends of the earth, and soon will encompass the globe. Behold! the preparations for a brighter era!

But not to dwell on these changes. Those that most deeply interest us, as they are intrinsically the most important, are those produced by the progress the Gospel has made in the world, as this, more plainly than any thing else, indicates the development of Divine Providence, in carrying forward to their consummation the vast designs of His mercy to our lost race. God is indeed in all history. All events are but the fulfilment of His will. And all He does is in subordination to one grand purpose—the redemption of a lost world, through the mediation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The last seventy years have been distinguished for united Christian effort, in happily-conceived and wisely-conducted plans, for the evangelization of the world. Previous to this period, we read of Christian missions in our own country, and in foreign lands, in connection with remarkable displays of divine grace. But they were far from combining the energy and the resources of the Church at large. She does not appear to have looked out on our race, to have felt that her field of operation was the world, and that upon her rested the responsibility of going into all the world, and preaching the Gospel to every creature. It would seem, that almost simultaneously the evangelical churches were moved by the Spirit of God to reflect

on their obligations in this respect. And no sooner was the expediency and efficiency of combined effort proposed, than the spirit of sect and party gave place to the spirit of Christian brotherhood and Christian union, from which emerged those great voluntary associations that are pre-eminently the glory of the age. To me it is an interesting fact, that the year that gave me birth, gave birth also to the Baptist Missionary Society of England—the first-born of kindred institutions of that period—and one of the most honored institutions of God, for spreading the gospel among the heathen. The names of Cary, Ward and Marshman, missionaries sent forth by this society, are embalmed in the memories of the pious of all denominations, and will be held in everlasting remembrance. To this day that great society is on its onward march to the conquest of the world, that it may lay it, as its tribute, at the feet of Jesus. Soon after the formation of the Baptist, the London Missionary Society was formed, (1795,) one of the largest and most efficient organizations in the world, and numbers among its missionaries some of the most distinguished and devoted men that ever blessed the world. In 1796 the Edinburg Missionary Society was formed. In 1800 the Church Missionary Society, and about the same time the great Methodist Missionary Society of England, among the most noble and efficient of this blessed fraternity. In 1803 the British and Foreign Bible Society was organized. In 1810 the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. In 1826 the American Home Missionary Society. In 1825 the American Tract Society. The auxiliaries of these societies exist in almost every town and city in Great Britain and the United States, reach the remotest churches, and call into action, to a great extent, the

benevolence of their members. I refer to this brilliant constellation of voluntary associations for the spread of the Gospel, that you may see with what an astonishing revival of the spirit of primitive Christianity the Church of Christ was visited, towards the close of the last and the commencement of the present century, and its continuance to the present time. Volumes would be required to record in detail their operations, and the wonderful results attending them. Since their organization, the Bible has been translated into most of the languages spoken on the globe, and millions of the human race, sunk into the most deplorable ignorance, have read, and can now read, in their own tongue, the wonderful works of God. The missionaries of the Cross, sent out by these societies, have visited every continent on the globe, have penetrated into the deepest recesses of heathenism, gone to the farthest verge of this green earth, to distant climes and rivers unknown to song, and proclaimed the news of salvation through the cross of Christ, to those sitting in darkness, and in regions gloomy with the shades of death. Millions and hundreds of millions have, through their instrumentality, been converted to God; have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and are before the throne of God; and millions more are now treading the pathway of life through these vales of sorrow, to their abode in glory. The Redeemer's crown glows with immortal brilliancy from the gems of earth, and Heaven's high arches resound with hallelujahs from the lips of these redeemed children of idolatry and guilt. What a privilege is it, to have been born and to have lived in such a period! How much greater the privilege and the honor to have been permitted to have some humble agency in carrying forward this blessed

and glorious work! It was my privilege to be present at the organization of the American Bible Society, and take a part in the formation of the American Home Missionary Society, than which, there has been no agency more efficient in the establishment and nurture of evangelical churches, under educated and pious ministers, in our country. Could we trace to their sources all the good influences that have, for the last century, been permeating our territories, our new, and some of our older States, that have been formed within that period, promoting good order, intelligence, and the social and domestic virtues, we should find the fountain of many of them in the American Home Missionary Society, while it has been the instrument, under God, of saving tens of thousands of immortal souls, and preparing them for Heaven. The tide of public sentiment in regard to the mode of prosecuting missionary operations is changing in our country. Voluntary associations are giving place to denominational and ecclesiastical boards. I hope these boards may succeed, and earnestly desire my congregation may co-operate with those in our church. But you will appreciate the preferences of one who has, for nearly a half century, been intimately associated with the voluntary system. I trust the other may prove as extensively useful.

It is time, however, to direct your thoughts to the changes that have taken place in our town, and in our own congregation during my ministry among you. In referring to the events of this ministry, my heart is so full of happy remembrances and causes for grateful thankfulness, mingled with occasions for sadness, so few, compared with those that usually fall to the allotments of men, and especially those of my profession, in the pilgrimage of life, that I only fear I may too



greatly impose on your patience. Old men are said to be garrulous, fond of talking about old times and old friendships, in which others take but little interest. I shall endeavor to guard against this propensity, and be as concise as the subject will admit.

It is delightful to look back and recall the kind providences of God in ordering our allotments. In the spring of 1818, after a hasty academic, collegiate and theological course of study, that had not occupied more than one-half of the time usually devoted to them in our Church, I was licensed by the Presbytery of New-York to preach the Gospel. I spent the summer months in preaching principally to two vacant congregations in the State of New-York. At that time I had not heard of Harrisburgh, except as the seat of government of Pennsylvania, and knew not an individual resident in the place. With an invitation in my hand to visit an important vacant congregation in the State of New-York, I received, through a friend, an invitation to visit Harrisburgh. Judging by what I then knew of the two places, there were many, and, one would have supposed, controlling reasons, why I should have accepted the invitation to the former place, and not have come to Harrisburgh. But the providence of God directed otherwise, and I came here early in the fall of 1818. Harrisburgh was then a borough of little more than 2,500 inhabitants, principally of German descent. The church had been organized in 1794, from a part of the Paxton congregation, for many years under the pastoral care of the Rev. Mr. John Elder, originally from Ireland. Its ecclesiastical birth was with many throes, as Mr. Elder, for a long time, most violently and persistently opposed its formation. Previous to 1818 it had had two pastors. The first was the Rev.

Nathaniel R. Snowden—a man of some eccentricities, and much beloved by a part of the congregation. He continued the pastor for eleven years from the organization of the church. During a part of this time he divided his labors between this church and a church in Middle Paxton, located in the immediate vicinity of the village of Dauphin. The second pastor was the Rev. James Buchanan, who also devoted a part of his time to the church in Middle Paxton. Mr. B. was much and justly esteemed for his piety and talents. His pulpit services were very highly estimated. A gloomy and desponding temperament interfered with the performance of his pastoral duties. But notwithstanding this, he was much beloved by his people. The church, during his ministry, increased in numbers, and greatly, I imagine, in its vitality. His pastoral relation to the church continued for seven years—from 1808 to 1815. When I came to Harrisburgh, in 1818, there were but two settled pastors in the place; the Rev. Mr. John Rahauser of the German Reformed Church, a man of singular modesty, but of great excellence. He preached in the German language only, or with but few exceptions. I have been told by those who knew him best, that in the pulpit he was among the most powerful of the ministers of that denomination. He left this in 1819. After that he occupied some of the most important positions in his church, and sustained his high reputation until his death. The other pastor was the Rev., afterwards Dr. George Lochman, pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of this place, in which relation he continued until 1826, when he died. Many, I have no doubt, still remember the good Doctor. His polite, bland, yet simple manners, his affectionate disposition, manifested especially toward the children and

youth of the town without discrimination. His temper never seemed ruffled, except, indeed, when the honor and prosperity of the old Lutheran Church were threatened. For that church he entertained the profoundest regard. Its glorious founder, its histories, its memories, and, associated, as it was, with his own religious experience, rendered it, in his view, pre-eminently the church that "Christ loved." Without being a bigot, he thought no one's spiritual interests would be better subserved than by throwing his lot in with the good old Lutheran Church. In sentiment, Dr. Lochman was an evangelical Arminian, and when, in my youthful pugnacity, I ventured to assert that Martin Luther was a good Calvinist, I was sure to meet his frown, with the intimation that I had never read Luther's later works in German, or I would know better. He was a man of mark. Methinks I see him now, walking the street, cane in hand. In his dress and manners a perfect gentleman of the old school, bowing politely to all he met, and addressing some pleasant word to every child and youth that passed him. The Doctor's labors were immense. Beside his congregation in town, he had some five or six, perhaps more, in the country, to which he ministered. His influence in Harrisburgh and the surrounding country was great, and his name is still held in affectionate remembrance.

My reception by the people of the congregation was exceedingly cordial and kind. After preaching two Sabbaths, and several times during the weeks I was here, I received not only a unanimous, but an urgent call to settle over the congregation as their pastor. The attendance then upon the services of the sanctuary was very respectable as to numbers, but the members in communion were small. There were a few pious, ex-

cellent men, and a much larger number of godly, praying women. In these last consisted the strength of the church as a spiritual body. The hope of its permanency and its increase rested, under God, with them. Encouraged by the promise of the cordial co-operation of this little church, and especially of these female members, who, it was easily seen, were devoted to its spiritual interests, with, I can honestly say, much trembling and many fears, in view of the responsibility I was to assume, I accepted of the call, and soon after entered upon my labors. I found here a Union Sabbath School composed of children, and taught by teachers of all the denominations of Christians in the borough; and a weekly prayer-meeting, conducted by the female members of the church.

These, with the exception of what meetings were held by a few Methodist brethren, who, during that year, (1818,) formed themselves into a church, were the only lay efforts for advancing the cause of religion then in Harrisburgh. After some persuasion, our elders and other lay members of the church were induced to hold meetings for prayer, for their own spiritual improvement, which, ere long, were attended indiscriminately by all who wished to come. In those elders and laymen were soon developed, to a remarkable degree, the gift of prayer. I never knew laymen more gifted. In a short time no private house could hold the number who wished to attend. At the foot of the capitol hill, then an open common, corner of Third and Walnut streets, there stood a large, long school-house, which was obtained and used for our Wednesday evening meetings. It soon became exceedingly crowded, and in those meetings, we ere long had, as we believed, the evidence of the presence of God's Holy Spirit. I can-



not now remember how long they were held in that school-house, but I do remember well, that whenever held, there was the spirit of earnest prayer and of most delightful Christian sympathy and affection. We early introduced the use of Dobell's hymns in our social meetings, and it soon became a great favorite with the church. The singing of some of the favorite hymns in that collection, especially "How firm a foundation ye saints of the Lord," &c., "It was all of thy grace I was brought to obey," still lingers in my memory, and often wakes up the most delightful recollections. But there was one we usually sang, the congregation standing, at the close of our meetings, that seemed to be indited by, and to breathe the very spirit of heaven :

" Our souls by love together knit,  
Cemented, mixed in one," &c., &c.

Often in my musings the voices of loved ones, most of whom have long since gone to the land of silence, seem to come floating down the years of the past, pouring forth, in sweetest strains, the words of that hymn on my ears, while, bathed in tears, I ask myself, "shall it be renewed in heaven?" On the first or second Sabbath after my ordination, which had been delayed much longer than is usual now, (for our old ministers strictly obeyed the injunction of Paul, "lay hands suddenly on no man,") at a communion season twenty-one were added to the church, all but two on the profession of faith. Such was my introduction to my ministerial and pastoral labors in this church. A Sabbath school of our own was early organized, and taught by the members of our own church. Our Sabbath services and weekly meetings were regularly observed; our Wednesday evening meetings continued with great in-

terest for a long time. The children, on stated occasions, repeated their Catechism to their pastor. A Bible class was formed, and taught once a week, which continued through many years, most of the members of which were brought into the church, and became its most intelligent and devoted members. On looking over our church records, I find, that for many years, but few communion Sabbaths occurred in which there were not some added to the church. During the time I had the exclusive pastoral charge, there have been at least five seasons of special religious interest, in 1824, 1827, 1830, 1834, and the close of 1842 and the commencement of 1843. The last was by far the deepest and most pervading. Since the united pastoral relation, there have been at least two seasons of more than ordinary interest. Many incidents crowd upon my memory, involving the most gratifying expressions of confidence and affection on the part of the congregation, and of personal friendship on the part of individuals, which, while of deep interest to myself, would not be of any interest to others.

On the whole, in reviewing my ministerial and pastoral life, I feel that I have cause for unbounded gratitude to God, for his great goodness to me individually, and to my family, which has been reared up among you. I cannot fail in recognizing the marked and special providence of God, in my settlement over this congregation, and my continuance with you through so long a pastorate. I shall remember with gratitude, to the close of my life, the great kindness with which I was received by them, when I first came among them an entire stranger, and the indulgence with which myself and my ministry were treated. I feel that I shall have cause for grateful wonder, throughout eternity,

for the degree of success which God gave to my ministration, especially during the first years of my ministry, when, owing to my previous hurried preparations for my profession, my labors were very severe, and attended often with the deepest depression of spirits. How sweet are the memories of the sympathies I then experienced from a kind and indulgent people! I feel myself almost irresistibly impelled to give utterance to the names of Whitehill, Wier, Sloan, Agnew, Graydon, Fisher and many others—names that must be ever dear to me. And not only during the first, but all the following years of my ministry to the present moment, I have abundant cause for gratitude. Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life. I have not been without my sorrows and trials, but they have been fewer than those of most men, and especially most ministers. There have been times when, doubtless, the congregation have thought I acted wrong towards them; and, to tell the truth, there have been times when I have thought the congregation acted wrong towards me. If both were correct in their opinions, of which I have no doubt, it only proves, “to err is human.” Seventy years is a long life, and forty-four years a long pastorate over one congregation. It would be strange, indeed, if one, imperfect and sinful as we all are, should not find occasion, in reviewing such a life, for deep humiliation before God. I confess to innumerable sins and short-comings, for which I implore His forgiveness through Jesus Christ, His Son. I confess to my people to much that I ought not to have done, and to more that I have left undone, and I am not ashamed to ask their forgiveness. But, on the whole, I feel conscious of having endeavored to preach the Gospel among you, without respect of persons. I call you to re-



cord that I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. I rejoice that the Gospel which I have preached has proved the savour of life unto life to so many, while it is a cause of great sadness that to more I fear it will have proved the savour of death unto death. Results of this kind, however, are with God. Let us remember, my hearers, there is a day approaching that will declare them.

While I have personally cause for gratitude, the congregation has great cause for thankfulness to God. It is now sixty-eight years since this church was organized. With the exception of six years of this period, it has enjoyed the labors of pastors, settled over them, with very few, comparatively, silent Sabbaths. While it is far from having been a perfect church, it has, nevertheless, embraced in its communion very many bright examples of piety. The legacy of the prayers and example of such is a rich inheritance to any people. This church has been the instrument, in the hand of God, of effecting much good to the inhabitants of Harrisburgh. It has been the means of restraining wickedness, promoting intelligence and good order, and of fostering the spirit of evangelical piety throughout the community. There are, I apprehend, but few places in our country, of the population of this city, where the religious element is so thoroughly evangelical as here; where errorists are so little tolerated, and where the churches of different denominations are so closely united in the bonds of Christian fellowship. This church has largely contributed to the influences, that, under God, have secured these results. It has also done much for sustaining the institutions of religion at home, and sending the Gospel abroad. When I first settled here, the congregation worshipped in a very plain brick build-

ing, a little below where our present house of worship stands, on the opposite side of the street, and were then in debt for a deep gallery that had been recently erected around three sides of the church. Sometime after my settlement, compelled, for want of room for Sabbath schools and the weekly meetings, the congregation put up an expensive addition to the old church. Some time after this, they tore the old church to the ground, purchased and tore down the house adjoining, and built a large, commodious and elegant house of worship; and when that was burned down, built the one we now occupy. Every new building has been a great advance in size, in convenience and in beauty on the old. All this has involved a great expenditure of money, and I trust it will be soon said we are out of debt. In the mean time, the Gospel has been respectably sustained, and much has been done to aid in sending it to the destitute in our own land and in foreign countries. We should be thankful that God has enabled us to do all this, and to Him we should give all the praise. Up to this time this church has had but four pastors, two of whom are now actively engaged in ministering to it. Whether this, all things considered, will be regarded as a cause of thankfulness, I leave you to judge. This, however, is certain; it has been saved those convulsions, so frequently occasioned by the change of ministers. Since my settlement here, the Lutheran Church has enjoyed the labors of five excellent pastors, the German Reformed of eight, the Episcopal of thirteen, and the Methodists of about twenty. Beside them, several others, with whom I am not so well acquainted, have labored in the Gospel ministry in this place. My pastorate here is more than twice as long as any pastorate over the same congregation in the Presbytery of Har-

risburgh, longer than any in the Synod of Pennsylvania, and, with but few exceptions, in the State, of either branch of the Presbyterian Church. Whatever may be the opinion of some of the expediency of such long settlements, it certainly speaks well for the stability and permanency of the congregation. It is not one given to new things. This church has passed through severe trials. The one of eighteen hundred and thirty-eight was a severe trial, but the one of 1858 was much more severe. Yet they have been the occasions for good. Like Jacob's flock, we have become two bands. We deeply felt the separation, as we have no doubt many of the other band did. But it has tended to the increase of the members and influence of the Presbyterian family in our city. Forty-four years ago, with the prophet we might have lamented, "Jacob is little, by whom shall Jacob arise?" Well, Jacob has arisen. As a denomination, we maintain fully our relative position, number and social influence. We hope the division in the Presbyterian Church will not be perpetual. We think we can see the beginning of the end. In the mean time, let not Ephraim envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim, but let us labor together for the advancement of the cause of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Brethren, no one knows what is before him in the future. God has wisely and kindly hid it from our eyes. Trials and sorrows may yet befall us. Clouds and storms may yet overtake us, and render the pilgrimage of life sad and dreary. Whatever God may please to send on me, I trust he will give me grace to bear. But it will certainly not be regarded as unreasonable, that after so long a pastorate, I should desire to live and die among the only people to whom I have sustained this relation, and to preach, while He gives me mind and

strength to do it, the unsearchable riches of Christ. Here are buried my own dead. Around them repose the ashes of many of those who have broke the bread of life, and with them I would that my ashes should repose until the morning of the resurrection.

“God of my childhood and my youth,  
The guide of all my days,  
I have declared thy Heavenly truth  
And told thy wondrous ways.

“Wilt thou forsake my hoary hairs,  
And leave my fainting heart?  
Who shall sustain my sinking years,  
If God my strength depart?

“Let me thy power and truth proclaim  
To the surviving age,  
And leave a savour of thy name,  
When I shall quit the stage.

“The land of silence and of death  
Attends my next remove.  
Oh ! may these poor remains of breath  
Teach the wide world thy love.”



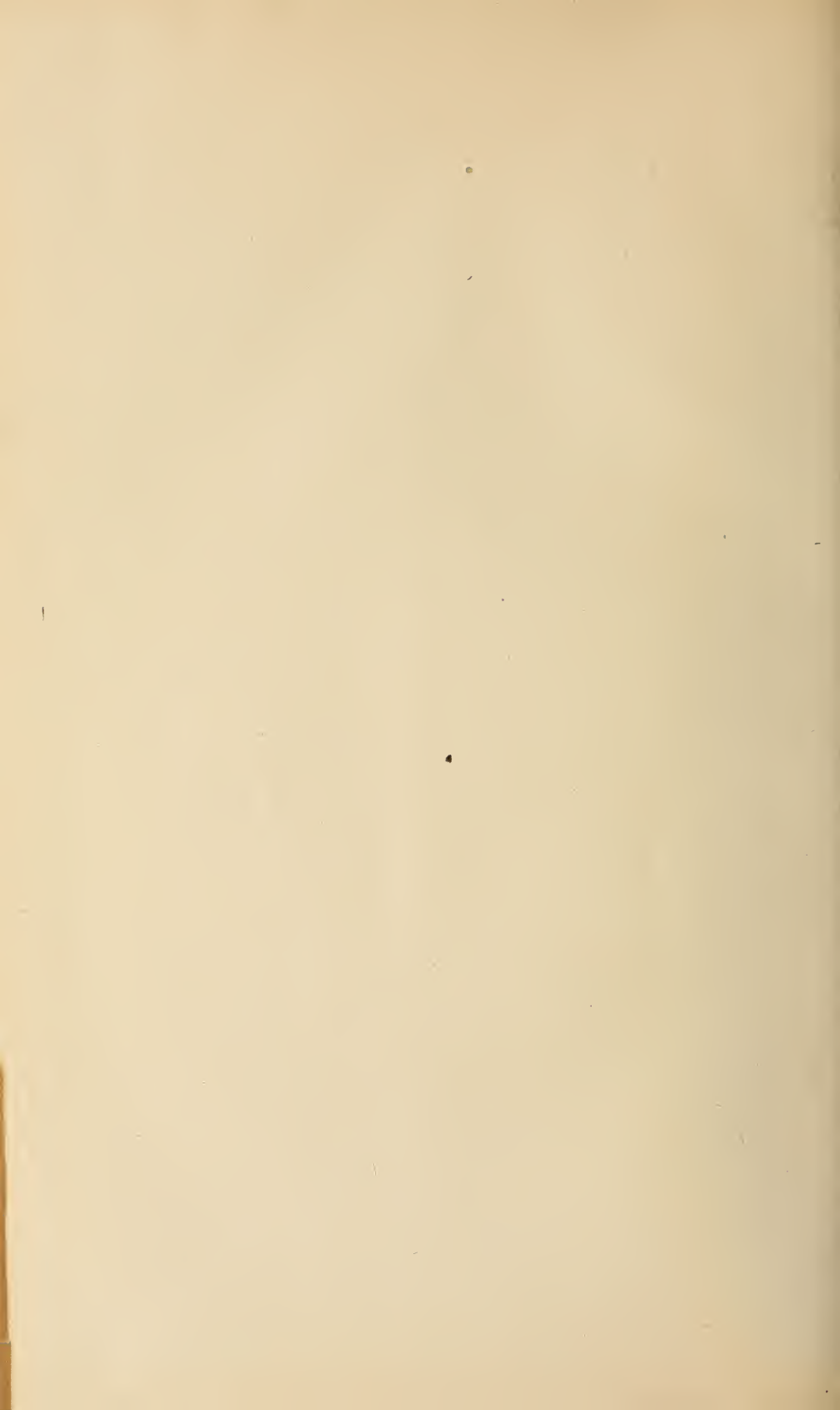














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